Title: Need to improve the conditions of Beedi workers in Karnataka.

SHRI VINAY KUMAR SORAKE (UDUPI): I would like to highlight the miserable plight of about eight lakh Beedi workers in the State of Karnataka, half of which are from Dakshina Kannada region with the taluka town of Belthangady alone accounting for more than 50,000 workers. The Beedi industry used to generate additional income for the family with women and girls engaged in large numbers making it a household enterprise.

Due to shortage of raw material there, workdays have been reduced to two or three days a week, rendering them idle and unproductive for rest of the week. The wages are low compared to neighbouring Kerala State where the State Government has initiated moves to improve their lot. The Karnataka beedi worker does not enjoy bonus, pension or other welfare/medical benefits including Provident Fund. Raw material supplies from Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Gujarat are erratic since the Tendu leaves contract is now awarded to Cooperatives.

I urge the Centre to take steps to improve the plight of beedi workers in Karnataka and to ensure uniform payment of wages and other social security benefits to them and also to ensure adequate supplies of beedi leaves for their work throughout the week.